

**Office of Economic Development  
Economic Development Advisory Board  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** April 7, 2009: **Time:** 7:30 A.M.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Rich Adams  
Christian Alder  
Jim LeCheminant  
Jo Wilson  
Steve Wood

**EX-OFFICIO**

Mayor Scott Smith (excused)  
Chris Brady (excused)  
Brian Campbell  
Jeff Crockett  
Charlie Deaton  
Steve Shope

**STAFF PRESENT**

Betsy Adams  
William Jabjiniak  
Mike James  
Jodi Sorrell

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Theresa Carmichael (excused)  
Jared Langkilde (excused)  
Steve Parker (excused)

**GUESTS**

Marc Soronson

**1. Chair's Call To Order**

Chair Jim LeCheminant called the April 7, 2009 meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Board to order at 7:32 A.M. at the City of Mesa Council Chambers, Lower Level, 57 E. 1st Street, Mesa, Arizona 85201.

**2. Items from Citizens Present**

There were no items from citizens present.

**3. Approval of Minutes from March 3, 2009 board meeting.**

Chair LeCheminant called for a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held on March 3, 2009.

**MOTION:** Rich Adams moved that the minutes from March 3, 2009 be approved as written.

**SECOND:** Christian Alder

**DECISION:** Passed unanimously

**4. Hear a presentation and provide a recommendation on Central Mesa Transit Alternatives Analysis**

Mr. Mike James, Deputy Transportation Director, commented that the two goals identified in the study were to analyze the various technologies for mass transit and

identify the corridor alignment. The purpose of the presentation is to present the preliminary staff recommendation and encourage EDAB to make a recommendation that can be taken to the City Council. EDAB's recommendation will be included in a summary along with all of the Boards, Committees and Commissions recommendations that have and will hear the presentation. The summary will be presented to the City Council. Mr. James introduced Mr. Marc Soronson, Corridor Project Manager from Metro Light Rail, to give the presentation.

Mr. Marc Sorenson, Metro Light Rail, gave a presentation on the Central Mesa Corridor Study. He explained that Metro is in the process of finalizing recommendations for the Alternative Analysis and that it has been a positive process. There has been public involvement and a canvas of the alignment is coming up to let everyone know of the Public Meetings to be held. The Regional Transportation Plan was adopted by the voters and the focus is on the Central Mesa Corridor. The Sycamore Station in Mesa has been responsible for 11% of the system ridership to date. Comments from the public have been that there needs to be a better way to serve the East Valley and one way is to extend the Light Rail. Gilbert Road has been surfacing as a possibility of extending the project. The Link service has been successful, but the demand is high to extend the project from Mesa Drive to Gilbert Road.

Community Feedback and objectives are:

- Better serve the East Valley with an Light Rail Transit (LRT) extension east to Gilbert Road
- Improve LINK BRT service to match LRT frequencies
- Improved and expanded bus services to connect with LRT
- Better Transit service to ASU Polytech Campus/ Gateway
- Promote economic development by connecting Mesa residents and employment to other regional centers
- Promote integration of LRT and land use planning to support sustainability and livable community initiatives

The LRT project is a federally funded project with a 50/50 match. Mr. Soronson mentioned that there are no funds to extend the project to Gilbert Road; however there are funds of \$194 million that are programmed in the Regional Transportation Plan for the extension to Mesa Drive. Since it is a federally funded project there are a number of steps in the process that have to be gone through in order to qualify for the federal matching funds.

Project Readiness is in the process of starting to gather together the list of documents that are needed to submit to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) so that the project can be gotten into preliminary engineering and get on with the advanced engineering, final design and construction.

FTA Readiness Milestones are:

- Selection of Locally Preferred Alternative
- New Starts Evaluation
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Travel forecasting certifications
  - Evolving emphasis on Livable Communities, land use & environmental sustainability
  - Economic Development

- Capital /operations estimates
- Finance Plan
- Project Management Plans (PMPs)
- Risk analysis

As part of the Alternatives Analysis a determination is to be made on what alignment to advance and what technology to advance. There are 3 different alignments that are being studied in the downtown area and 2 different transit options or technologies. One technology being Light Rail Transit (LRT) and the other is the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The cost of doing LRT is higher than BRT, but there is a longer life expectancy out of the LRT vehicles and a permanent investment in tracks with infrastructure that has a direct impact on economic development. There is a larger passenger capacity with LRT, and there is operational cost savings since you only have to use 1 driver for LRT as opposed to BRT.

Tier 2 Evaluation Criteria was:

- Traffic Issues
  - Roadway impacts/Traffic operations
- Land Use
  - Compatibility with existing and future
- Populations Served
  - Travel markets
- Environmental Issues
  - Consistency with NEPA process
- Historic Preservation
- Design & constructability issues
- Economic Development Potential
  - Focus on downtown Mesa
- Rider Benefits
  - Projected # of riders
- Costs
  - Capital
  - Operating and maintenance

The Downtown Mesa Criteria was:

- Travel lanes & left turns
- Pedestrian crosswalks
- Bicycle lanes
- On-street parking
- Existing curbs and sidewalks
- Landscape, streetscape elements & bulbouts
- Access to major destinations
- Economic development
- Construction phasing

The preliminary alignment recommendation is for Main Street. Main Street offers the best opportunity to serve the activity centers, provides the best walk access to activity centers, reduces property acquisition requirement, minimizes travel times and has the greatest economic development opportunities.

There is a 40% increase in ridership on a daily basis with the LRT alternatives versus the BRT alternatives. The costs for the BRT are significantly less than for the LRT, however the life cycle is higher for LRT versus BRT. The LRT has a lifespan of approximately 30 years versus 12 years for the BRT and the LRT has the ability to carry more passengers.

The End of the Line evaluation compared Horne and Mesa Drive. The location for a park- and- ride at Horne was not optimal and exceeds RTP identified funding. Extending to Horne would not capture the additional travel market. Ending at Mesa Drive will reduce the cost by approximately \$25-30 million plus provide an interim location for a park-and-ride. It will also serve as an economic catalyst for Downtown Mesa, and allow better opportunity to meet FTA criteria for cost effectiveness. Phase II could extend east to Gilbert Road with better opportunities for a park-and-ride lot and meet the needs of the community.

The preliminary recommendation is:

- Light rail technology is the favored technology
- Main Street alignment corridor
  - 2-lane versus 4-lane to be determined during ongoing studies
  - Mesa Drive as initial end-of-line (2015)
  - Mesa Drive park-and-ride as an interim
- Gilbert Road end-of-line (Phase II), with 750-1,000 car park-and-ride (possible option for local funding)
- Continue LINK BRT service to Power Road/ASU/Gateway and identify resources to match LRT frequencies
- Continue to advance transit supportive land use policies and initiatives in Mesa

Mr. Soronson commented that construction can happen in the Downtown area with minimum disruption. Construction can be staggered in the Downtown area over 3 summers and can be alternated between east of Country Club and west of Country Club to accommodate the off peak business times, which are during the summer months. There will be a series of public meetings over the next few weeks and several more presentations to Meetings, Boards, Committees, Alliances and Associations. A tentative schedule of May 18, 2009 is set to be back in front of the City Council for action to be taken on the locally preferred alternative. Then it goes to the Metro Board of Directors for action on this alternative (Summer 2009) and then finally on to the MAG Regional Council for action (Summer 2009). MAG is the keeper of the regional transportation plan.

The next steps are:

- Initiate federal environmental documentation
- Create Downtown Mesa stakeholder group
- Work with stakeholders to define criteria for downtown urban design elements
  - Maintain uniqueness
  - 2-lane vs. 4-lane alignment
  - On-street parking orientation
  - Public art (existing and future)
  - Catenary poles vs. span wire
  - TPSS locations
  - Station design
  - Downtown transit facility
- Initiate Preliminary Engineering

Chair LeCheminant commented that Phase I is scheduled to be completed by 2015. He wanted to know if there was an estimated date if the LRT was extended to Gilbert Road.

Mr. Soronson commented that there was no schedule to go to Gilbert Road. There has been discussion to extend to Gilbert Road if funds could be found. It would be an extra 2 miles, but right now there currently is no funding and no schedule.

Mr. Deaton suggested that the bus service be continued in addition to the LRT.

Mr. Alder asked for comment on the actual number of ridership compared to what was predicted.

Mr. Soronson responded that there were 2 predictions of the ridership for the 20 mile section. One was the number for the opening year and the other one was the 20 year forecast. The 20 year ridership forecast was around 48,000 per month and the opening year forecast was approximately 26,000 per month. In the first few months we have already seen ridership in the high 30,000. Ridership has exceeded by approximately 10,000 in the first 90 days as opposed to forecasts for the 1st year. The Sycamore Park-and-Ride lot is the busiest lot and station in the system. The lot is not quite 90% full and more turn-over at the lots than was expected. There is more ridership to ASU, which is not surprising due to the number of faculty and students living in the East Valley. On any given school day there are 70,000 to 100,000 people on campus. The numbers to the airport are surprisingly high with a forecast of 1,100 per day and that number already has been reached. This does not include ridership of the automated train that Sky Harbor will construct over the next few years. The 1,100 riders per day is strictly with a bus-shuttle connection that Sky Harbor is operating from the 44<sup>th</sup> Street Station to the airport terminal. There are more bikes on the LRT than anticipated due to students taking their bikes to get around the college campus. They are surprised by the large number coming from the East Valley. The numbers in the Phoenix park-and-ride lots are nowhere near what they thought they would be. Right now the project that has the highest likelihood to qualify for federal funding is Central Mesa.

Mr. Alder suggested that the long term benefits of the alternative choice be considered in place of short term gains.

Mr. Jabjiniak expressed a concern regarding construction disruption to the business community being staggered over the length of 3 summers. He asked if consideration has been given to working off peak hours and/or during the night time hours. He also asked if consideration had been given to elevating the train through the Downtown area.

Mr. Soronson responded that there were several things that were considered to lessen the construction impact to businesses, but working the off hours was not considered. There are still several things to be looked at during the preliminary engineering such as minimizing the impact to businesses. The goal is to get in and out as quickly as possible and to control costs.

Mr. James responded to the question of elevating the train through Downtown. It could be possible, but the costs would be 3-4 times higher than to keep it at surface level.

Mr. Deaton commented that going from a 4 lane street down to a 2 lane street will divert traffic to other surface streets. His concern was if Mesa has the capacity to handle the traffic on the arterial streets.

Mr. Soronson responded that there was enough capacity on the arterial streets to the north and south of Main Street to handle diverted traffic.

**MOTION:** Rich Adams moved that the staffs Central Mesa High Capacity Transit Alternatives Analysis Locally Preferred Alternative Recommendation be accepted and incorporate other concerns expressed in today's EDAB meeting.

**SECOND:** Jo Wilson

**DECISION:** Passed unanimously

## **5. Director's report**

Mr. Jabjiniak reported the resignation of board member Dale Easter, effective immediately, due to added responsibilities in his work assignments. The Mayor will be making a recommendation in the next few months. He encouraged the Board to submit recommendations to the Mayor or the Economic Development office.

The Coury dealership located at Superstition Springs has been sold. Mr. Ed Chavez has bought the dealership and saved approximately 70 jobs. He is going to maintain the Buick, GMC, and Pontiac dealership. The name will be changed to Mesa Pontiac Buick GMC pending state licensing agreements.

A Business Registry presentation was presented to the General and Economic Development Committee on February 26, 2009 regarding gathering intelligence on businesses that are actually in Mesa. The possibility of establishing a Business Registry was discussed. Mesa's IT Department has been requested to create a form for collecting essential data needed for all areas or departments of the city. Fire Safety and Tax and Licensing already collect data for their licensing and permit needs, which will be combined in the new form. A report is expected from IT approximately April 9, 2009. The objective is to have a single point of contact and source of information.

Approximately 10 Economic Development Stimulus Grant opportunities are being researched. Preliminary research for the Department of Commerce Grants and EDA Grants is that we have not been eligible. Research is ongoing.

Mr. Jabjiniak encouraged attendance at an event on Thursday, April 9, 2009 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 at the Tempe Center for the Arts. The event is called "Convening the Community" and is sponsored by GPEC. It is a summit to address the economic and budget crisis. Mr. Campbell explained that the Summit grew out of the Board meeting last month at GPEC. There was a presentation of the impact of the budget cuts on some of the significant infrastructure to the state and our competitiveness. Some of the issues from energy, education, health care and several other core industries are being focused on. A round table discussion will be lead by the Governor, Legislative leadership and Dr. Crowe. They will discuss the impact of the budget and the alternatives that are available. Currently there are nearly 500 attendees and he encouraged the EDAB Board to attend if possible.

Mr. Jabjiniak encouraged feedback from the EDAB Board as to whether to have a monthly report of the GPEC activities placed on the monthly agenda.

EDAB's consensus was that it be placed on the monthly agenda with one of the GPEC Representatives giving a report on all GPEC activities each month.

**6. Other Business**

Chair LeCheminant reminded the EDAB members of the next scheduled meeting on May 5, 2009.

**7. Adjournment**

Chair LeCheminant adjourned the meeting at 8:36 a.m.

Submitted By:

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William J. Jabjiniak  
Economic Development Department Director  
(Prepared by Betsy Adams)